

The St Michael Steiner School

Online media usage: Guidelines for parents

As teachers and carers of young people we cannot stress strongly enough the detrimental effects of screen overexposure on children. The topic of media is often brought up on parents' evenings and individual meetings between teachers and parents. As a school we recommend that children have minimum to zero exposure to screens before the age of twelve.

We recognise that we live in a world where mobile phones and internet usage dominate our everyday life and we acknowledge that, as the children grow older, they become curious about the world, the world wide web included.

When teachers and parents follow a similar approach on these issues and are conscious of the way they use the internet and the time they spend on a screen in front of the children, it sets a good example for them. At school, we do not use our phones or our laptops in front of young children and very rarely in front of pupils between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

If the children, between the ages of twelve and fourteen, need a phone because they travel on public transport or because they want to communicate with their friends, we recommend they have a "brick" phone with which they can call or text but which does not have online access. As you know, smart phones are not allowed in school at all before High School.

We deem it better that the children do not have a social media account before they enter the High School (Class 9). If children have access to the internet before this age, we suggest that they do so in a communal space in the house (the living room or the kitchen for example) so that parents are aware of the content of what they watch/do online. If they have to do research for a school project, they can either do so with the help and supervision of their Class teacher at school or their parents at home.

We strongly recommend against video games. They are not beneficial to the children and can become very addictive. If children do play video games, it should happen occasionally as a special treat, rather than an ordinary part of a child's life.

Students of all ages would benefit from not watching TV or having access to social media or the internet in the morning, before school starts. Screen exposure before school interferes with the pupils' ability to engage with their lessons and will affect their learning and behaviour. Screen time should also end at least two hours before children go to sleep in the evening.

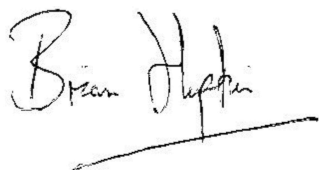
We would also recommend that notifications of group chats for applications like WhatsApp on children's phones (if they have a smart phone) are turned off by parents; that streaming services like Netflix have parental limits and that children are not given free access to browse through such services but that parents moderate and are aware of what their children are watching.

Students in Classes 9 and 10 are required to hand in their phones when they come into school. Students in Classes 11 and 12 are permitted to keep their phones. This partly recognises the maturity of these students, and it is important they are given the opportunity to develop responsibility of their own technology use.

Laptops are used in the High School for research and writing, under teachers' supervision, and the WiFi is turned off during break and lunch. In addition, as part of their Humanities and Literature curriculums High School students watch and study films and TV in lessons, learn about communications and information technology, look at advertising, marketing and propaganda and are encouraged to engage with media in a conscious, discerning manner.

If you have any questions, suggestions or would like to discuss the above further, please do not hesitate to contact your child's Class teacher or the College of teachers.

Please also see the school's Electronic Media Usage and E-safety Education Policy on the website and in the Parents' Handbook.



Approved by Chair of trustees on behalf of trustees

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